

think brings in the revenue needed to provide the services.

And the challenges you just don't know until you get more into it. That's why the hearings are so necessary.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Absolutely.

Mr. SHAYS. We have to draft legislation that we think is as accurate as can be, and then we present it to those who would be impacted: Employers, government individuals, and say tell us how it impacts your life. I have committee meetings, and I had individuals say, well, for a period of time I lost my job. This plan would have meant I would have had health care.

□ 2045

I had someone else who said, you know, I had a condition. I was insured. I couldn't hold my COBRA. I couldn't keep my insurance for a while. It stopped. And then I got insurance later and they said, you had a preexisting condition, and they weren't covered.

I had business men and women who said, I only have five people in my office, and we're paying an exorbitant amount. I mean, under our legislation, someone who had less than 10 would be paying, if their salary was \$21,000, 4 percent of payroll. If their salary was 83, they would be paying 6 percent of payroll, far less than what they're paying now, far less. And so, it's a debate that we need to have. Now, I'm waiting for the employer who comes to me and says, guess what? Under your plan, I'm going to have to pay more. I want him or her to tell us why and how much. So we need to make sure that people get on your web page or our web page and take a look at this legislation and give us feedback.

We're going to literally tour the country to argue that we need to begin, first, a debate on health care that our bill, the bill presented by Mr. WYDEN, the bill of the single payer, all of that should be brought forward for really a terrific debate.

Mr. LANGEVIN. I couldn't agree more. This is one of the most challenging issues facing us in our time right now. It's going to take time and effort to get the message out and hopefully encourage support for our plan.

I'm glad that you and I have made a commitment to travel the country so that we can help to bring the plan before people, hopefully to educate the American people about what we're proposing, and offering this as a viable solution to our Nation's health care crisis. It's clearly long overdue. And in my home State of Rhode Island, it's the number one domestic issue that I hear most about. It is directly tied in many ways to the health of our economy and making sure that our companies can be competitive in this global market. It's important to individuals and families.

And no person should have to worry if they're going to lose their home because they come down with a catastrophic illness or a family member comes down with a catastrophic ill-

ness, but that happens every day across this country right now because of the present health care system. And again, it's not that there is no cost associated with the uninsured. If someone is that sick and they need to be treated, they're going to go, very often, to the hospital, to the emergency room where they're going to be seen. But usually by then it's at the end stage of an illness where a person is so sick that they have to be likely hospitalized, or the cost of treating them is far more expensive than it otherwise would have been at the earlier stages when early intervention, early care would have made all the difference if it were with a prescription or some other treatment. Now we're offering a system to change that.

Mr. SHAYS. See, that's, I think, one of the key points. You could make an assumption that 15 percent are not covered and you're now going to cover them, that it means it's going to be more expensive for everyone. And there are arguments that we might have to phase the legislation in to make sure that we get more doctors and nurses and so on because we're looking at potential shortages. But the key thing is that those that don't have insurance have extreme measures taken, and by extreme, more services, more costly services. And so we have this artificially inflated cost, and that clearly will have an impact if everyone is, in fact, covered.

Before we end, I'd love to make sure we just go right through the simple parts of this legislation. If I could just start by saying you've written a bill that says all Americans should have the same health care benefits and opportunities that Federal employees have. Federal employees, Members of Congress who are Federal employees, we pay 28 percent of the cost, the government pays 72 percent of the cost. We can get a more expensive plan or we can get a less expensive plan.

What your plan does is it puts everyone in a pool, one pool, 300 million people. It spreads out the cost. It gives all Americans at least, probably—we have now 18 choices, there will probably be more, and they have choice. Your plan says that you will never lose your insurance, ever. Your plan says it doesn't matter if you're an employer with five employees or one with a thousand. Your plan recognizes whether you're one person or 500, you're going to get covered and be part of the same pool.

And ultimately it means that we're going to do something that we've talked about for 50 years, and that is, this great country of ours, the United States of America, will have a universal plan, all Americans. And when we do it, I think you're going to find that we're going to say, what took us so long?

So it's just a real pleasure and an honor to work with you and your staff. And I look forward to our having some impact on this hugely important issue.

Mr. LANGEVIN. I thank the gentleman from Connecticut again for his

words and his support in helping to craft this bipartisan universal health care bill.

Like you, I believe that the American people deserve the same kind of health care coverage as Members of Congress. And this is a bill that achieves that goal. It's something that is long overdue. It's something that is vitally important to every family across America, making sure that our families are taken care of, our businesses can stay competitive, and that we're offering something that is affordable, not only for the short term, but for the long term.

In closing, for individuals, the American Health Benefits Program offers choice, affordability, and portability. You can take the coverage with you if you change jobs. And on the side of how we provide this coverage, it's managed competition whereby insurers would now have to compete for enrollees based on benefits, efficiency, service and price; again, a good model for guaranteeing coverage, but making sure that it's affordable, with an important component of cost containment, making sure that we're looking at using the most innovative technologies out there, such as health IT records, and other things that would make sure that we're providing the most efficient and affordable care possible, but comprehensive care.

I think my friend has some other comments that you would like to make as we close?

Mr. SHAYS. We just have to insert different names here, but our web page is www.house.gov/shays. If someone goes to www.house.gov/shays, they will see this plan, as we've been talking about, on our main page. And I'm assuming that your web page would be www.house.gov/langevin. So they can go on either of our web pages and see the plan.

We would love for people to respond, tell us what they like about it, how they would benefit. And then we would like their help in contacting their Member of Congress and saying we would like you to support the Langevin bill, and get on it. We need to start getting cosponsors. We need to encourage Congress to have hearings on this legislation, begin that process.

So again, that's www.house.gov/langevin or www.house.gov/shays.

Mr. LANGEVIN. I thank my colleague. And I couldn't agree more. We want people to look at this plan, tell us what part of it they like, what they don't, what works, what doesn't, so that we can improve upon it. And certainly it's important for people to get educated because this is an issue that is clearly confronting our country. It is serious, it is challenging, but the time to solve it is now.

We're beginning the process. We invite the American people to be partners with us in this effort. I look forward to traveling the country with you as we talk to groups across the country and hopefully enlisting their support,